

OCCASIONAL PAPERS
ON THE HISTORY OF
BOSTON COLLEGE

REV. TIMOTHY BROSNAHAN, S.J.

Boston College President, 1894–1898

National Spokesman for
Jesuit Liberal Education



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When Boston College's presidential baton was passed from Father J. Donald Monan to Father William P. Leahy last July 31, the transition understandably merited and received national attention. Change in the leadership of an institution of Boston College's current prestige and academic prosperity is of national interest. Such was not the case a century ago, however, when Father Timothy Brosnahan succeeded Father Edward Devlin as president in 1894. Boston College, then only three decades old, was small—indeed, tiny compared with the large and complex institution of today—but it enjoyed youthful optimism and self-assurance, qualities that were bolstered when the new president, Father Brosnahan, suddenly became America's leading spokesman for Jesuit higher education.

Father Brosnahan prefaced the first College catalogue of his regime with an essay entitled "System of Education," which gave a scholarly exposition of the vision and methodology of Jesuit education. He enlarged the essay the following year and in that form, except for the modification and then the omission of the original opening paragraph some decades later, Brosnahan's statement on Jesuit education appeared in every annual Boston College catalogue through the academic year 1951–1952, a proclamation repeated for 57 years.

Brosnahan was too modest to affix his name to a catalogue essay. While it was well known that he had authored it, only after his death was official acknowledgment made of his authorship. In 1916 *The Woodstock Letters*, a journal of American Jesuit activities and events, contained an 18-page obituary of Father Brosnahan. Writing of Brosnahan's Boston College presidency, the chronicler noted: "He wrote the summary of the aims and methods of Jesuit liberal education which he published in the annual catalogue of the College and which was afterwards used by other colleges of the Province for the same purpose."¹

Actually the observation in the obituary that the Brosnahan piece was used by other colleges "of the Province" was an understatement. The Province referred to was the Maryland-New York Province, which then included the eastern states from Maryland to Canada. A survey of American Jesuit colleges from coast to coast revealed that *during Brosnahan's lifetime* (he died in 1915) his statement was used in its entirety for one or more years at Santa Clara College in California and Gonzaga College in Spokane. It appeared with some changes but in recognizable form in the catalogues of St. Louis University as well as of Canisius College in Buffalo and St. Joseph's College in Philadelphia. And there were definite evidences of influence from the Brosnahan statement in the catalogues of the University of Detroit and John Carroll College in Cleveland.

After Brosnahan's death, and therefore after the date when the obituary stated that his declaration concerning Jesuit liberal education was used by other eastern Jesuit colleges as their own catalogue statement, his words were adopted as written for Boston College by Xavier College in Cincinnati and Loyola College in Baltimore and were used with slight modifications by Spring Hill College in Alabama, Rockhurst College in Kansas City, and Seattle University in Washington, while Creighton College in Omaha and Marquette University in Milwaukee had catalogue statements with definite echoes of Brosnahan.

In most of these colleges the Brosnahan statement, either in exact or derivative form, was used for only a few years, but the fact that it was used by so many colleges in so many parts of the country and that the period of its adoption by various colleges extended all the way from 1903 to 1932—38 years after it first appeared in the Boston College catalogue—gives it authenticity and importance as a reflection of and an influence on American Jesuit education.

One of the early historians of American higher education, Louis Franklin Snow, wrote in 1907 of the Report of the Yale Faculty of 1828 (which will be compared with the Brosnahan statement later): "The reverent regard paid to this formulation of collegiate ideas by twenty-five years of reference in the Yale Catalogue gives it the sanctity of a charter, a constitution or a bill of rights in our collegiate history."² The same can be claimed for the Brosnahan statement and its appearance for more than *twice* twenty-five years in the Boston College catalogue. Another historian of American higher education, Frederick Rudolph of Williams College, based his claim for the importance of the Yale Report of 1828 not on the honor accorded it in successive Yale catalogues but on its influence on other colleges. He spoke of Yale and Princeton in the early nineteenth century



Father Brosnahan was 38 years old when he became president.

becoming national colleges, unlike provincial Harvard. He wrote: "By sending out enthusiastic young graduates to found colleges in the barbaric West and South and by training clergymen to become college presidents, Yale and Princeton . . . were in a position to define what the American college would be. The report of 1828 gave them their rationale. The first catalogue of Beloit College in 1849 carried the assurance that its course of study was 'drawn up exactly on the Yale plan.' " ³ If becoming a statement of purpose for other institutions gave the Yale Report a place in American collegiate history, it would seem that the Brosnahan manifesto has equal claim.

CATALOGUE
OF THE
OFFICERS AND STUDENTS
OF
BOSTON COLLEGE,
BOSTON, MASS.

1894.



1895.

PRINTED BY THE EASTBURN PRESS.
165 DEVONSHIRE STREET.
1895.

Title page of the College catalogue in which Father Brosnahan first published his statement on Jesuit education.

The introductory paragraph of Brosnahan's statement deserves special attention. Instead of opening with catalogue rhetoric, Brosnahan starts with what reads like a footnote to a scholarly treatise:

The educational system of BOSTON COLLEGE is substantially that of all other colleges of the Society of Jesus. Since the publication of the Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica by the German government, and the Great Educators' Series by Scribner's Sons, those who are desirous of making either a scientific or historical study of that system have abundant sources of information. To these publications are referred readers interested in studying the detailed working of the system and the practical method of applying its principles as elaborated in the Ratio Studiorum.

The *Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica* is an imposing scholarly series of 34 volumes that were published between 1886 and 1906. (There is a set in O'Neill Library.) Individual volumes are devoted to educators such as Comenius and Pestalozzi, and four volumes (II, V, IX, and XVI) are on the *Ratio Studiorum*, that is, the educational method and system of the Jesuits. It is worth noting that the fourth and final volume on Jesuit education in the series appeared in 1894, the year that Brosnahan wrote his catalogue statement.

Most of the volumes in the *Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica* series consist of documents and commentary in the German language, but the four volumes on the Jesuits are principally in Latin. It is unlikely that immigrant parents in Roxbury or South Boston would be moved to read four heavy tomes on education even if the books were available and if the parents could read Latin. Was this reference by Brosnahan, therefore, pretentious or, if you will, a bit of academic showboating? Hardly. It would seem that the opening paragraph was addressed not to the students or their parents but to an American collegiate audience Brosnahan felt the catalogue might reach. Contemporary and subsequent events show that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Jesuit colleges had some problems in relating to the wider university community, especially regarding admission of Jesuit college graduates to professional and graduate schools. Brosnahan may well have hoped to acquaint some non-Jesuit educators with the rich and impressive history of Jesuits in education.

This hypothesis is borne out by Brosnahan's second reference, namely, the Great Educators' Series by Scribner's Sons. The series was edited by Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University and one of the most influential educators of his era. It consisted of a dozen small volumes on such educational figures as Aristotle,

Alcuin, Abelard, Froebel, Rousseau, and Horace Mann. In 1892 a volume entitled *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits* appeared. The author was Father Thomas Hughes of St. Louis University, who was later to establish himself as a major figure in American Catholic scholarship through the publication of his four-volume work, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America, Colonial and Federal*. Why didn't Brosnahan mention Hughes' name and the obviously relevant title of his book? He no doubt would have had he been addressing Catholic parents, who would naturally have confidence in such a book written by a Jesuit. But Brosnahan seems to have had in mind an audience that might not have been impressed by a then little known Jesuit but that would give credence to a volume published as part of the Scribner's series and sponsored by Nicholas Murray Butler.

If this reading of Brosnahan's intention in his first paragraph is correct, it gives heightened significance to the rest of his document, whose eight paragraphs are given here:

Education is understood by the Fathers of the Society in its completest sense, as the full and harmonious development of all those faculties that are distinctive of man. It is not, therefore, mere instruction or the communication of knowledge. In fact, the acquisition of knowledge, though it necessarily accompanies any right system of education, is a secondary result of education. Learning is an instrument of education, not its end. The end is culture, and mental and moral development.

Understanding, then, clearly the purposes of education, such instruments of education, that is, such studies, sciences or languages, are chosen as will most effectively further that end. These studies are chosen, moreover, only in proportion, and in such numbers as are sufficient and required. A student who is to be educated will not be forced, in the short period of his college course and with his immature faculties, to study a multiplicity of the languages and sciences into which the vast world of modern knowledge has been scientifically divided. If two or more sciences, for instance, give similar training to some mental faculty, that one is chosen which combines the most effective training with the largest and most fundamental knowledge.

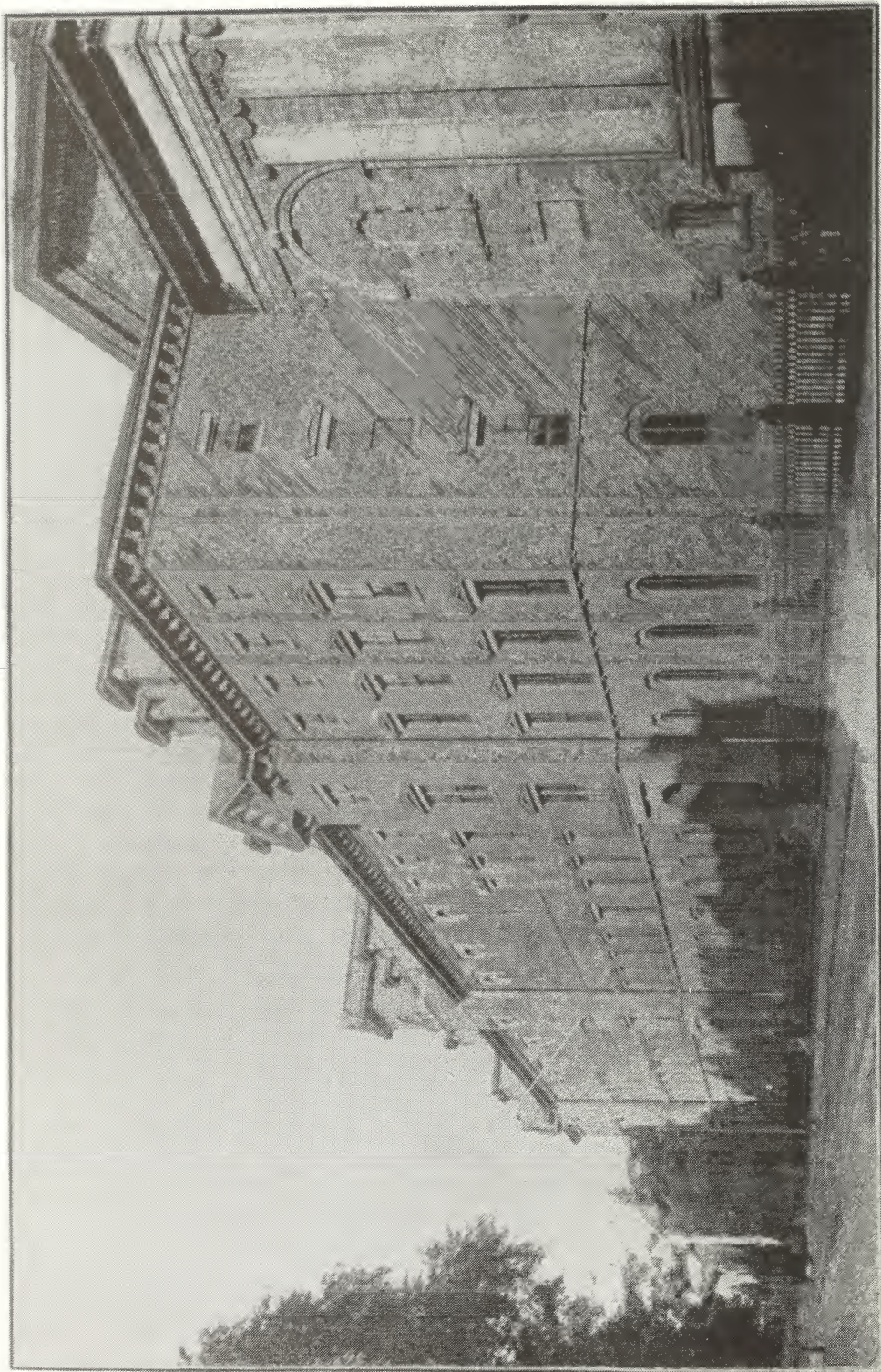
The purpose of the mental training given is not proximately to fit the student for some special employment or profession, but to give him such a general, vigorous and rounded development as will enable him to cope successfully even with the unforeseen emergencies of life. While giving the mind stay, it tends to remove the insu-

larity of thought and want of mental elasticity, which is one of the most hopeless and disheartening results of specialism in students who have not brought to their studies the uniform mental training given by a systematic college course. The studies, therefore, are so graded and classified as to be adapted to the mental growth of the student and the scientific unfolding of knowledge; they are so chosen and communicated that the student shall gradually and harmoniously reach, as nearly as may be, that measure of culture of which he is capable.

It is fundamental in the system of the Society of Jesus that different studies have distinct and peculiar educational values. Mathematics, the Natural Sciences, Language and History are complementary instruments of education to which the doctrine of equivalence cannot be applied. The specific training given by one cannot be supplied by another.

Furthermore, Language and History have always been held in esteem as leading factors in education. Mathematics and the Natural Sciences bring the student into contact with the material aspects of nature, and exercise the inductive and deductive powers of reason. Language and History effect a higher union: they are manifestations of spirit to spirit, and by their study and for their acquirement the whole mind of man is brought into widest and subtlest play. The acquisition of Language especially calls for delicacy of judgment and fineness of perception, and for a constant, keen and quick use of the reasoning powers. A special importance is attached to the classic tongues of Rome and Greece. As these are languages with a structure and idiom remote from the language of the student, the study of them lays bare before him the laws of thought and logic, and requires attention, reflection, and analysis of the fundamental relations between thought and grammar. In studying them the student is led to the fundamental recesses of language. They exercise him in exactness of conception in grasping the foreign thought, and in delicacy of expression in clothing that thought in the dissimilar garb of the mother-tongue. While recognizing, then, in education the necessity and importance of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, which unfold the interdependence and laws of the world of time and space, the Jesuit system of education has unwaveringly kept Language in a position of honor as an instrument of culture.

Lastly, the system does not share the illusion of those who seem to imagine that education, understood as an enriching and stimulat-



ing of the intellectual faculties, has a morally elevating influence in human life. While conceding the effects of education in energizing and refining imagination, taste, understanding and powers of observation, it has always held that knowledge and intellectual development of themselves have no moral efficacy. Religion only can purify the heart, and guide and strengthen the will.

The Jesuit system of education, then, aims at developing, side by side, the moral and intellectual faculties of the student, and sending forth to the world men of sound judgement, of acute and rounded intellect, of upright and manly conscience. And since men are not made better citizens by the mere accumulation of knowledge, without a guiding and controlling force, the principal faculties to be developed are the moral faculties. Moreover, morality is to be taught continuously; it must be the underlying base, the vital force supporting and animating the whole organic structure of education. It must be the atmosphere the student breathes; it must suffuse with its light all that he reads, illumining what is noble and exposing what is base, giving to the true and false their relative light and shade.

In a word, the purpose of Jesuit teaching is to lay a solid substructure in the whole mind and character for any superstructure of science, professional and special, also for the building up of moral life, civil and religious.

As an expression of educational philosophy, Brosnahan's statement admittedly sounds dated as one would expect of something written a century ago. It uses the language of a faculty psychology long out of vogue. But the language doesn't vitiate the concepts. If, for example, instead of writing about training mental faculties, Brosnahan spoke only of educational results—or, from his frame of reference, of faculties translated into action—such as logical reasoning, perceptive reading, swift detection of sophistry, grace of written and oral expression,

Opposite Page: In 1857 Father John McElroy purchased land in the South End. The lot fronted on a main thoroughfare, Harrison Avenue, with Concord and East Newton Streets on either side and James Street at the rear. The Jesuit residence and the stately church of the Immaculate Conception were built facing Harrison Avenue. The College, shown here as it was in the Brosnahan era, was on James Street. The rear of the church may be seen at the extreme right of the photograph. Father McElroy's original building of 1863 did not extend behind the church. In 1888, to accommodate growing enrollment, the College building was extended by 50 feet at both ends.

he would be in line with the most up-to-date jargon about education for performance or competency-oriented education. Brosnahan displays more faith in the specific or exclusive utility of certain subjects to develop particular skills than most educators would now admit, but there are still stout advocates of the disciplinary value of certain subjects, as witness the literate physician, Lewis Thomas, who in his best-seller, *The Medusa and the Snail*, proposed classical Greek as a better basis for admission to medical school than Medcats.⁴ Be that as it may, the purpose of this paper is not to defend Brosnahan's statement or urge its present relevance but to assert its historical significance.

To return to the Yale Report, it has by no means been hallowed by all educational historians. Since it was a chief factor in postponing the advent of electivism, its influence has been considered baneful and reactionary by some. Writing a half century ago, Yale's historian George Wilson Pierson observed that no judicious account of the rise and decline of the elective system had yet been written because the issue was too controversial and the facts themselves were still in dispute. He acknowledged that from a pro-electivism view, Yale played the heavy villain in the curriculum drama. "For example," he says, "an anthology of statements on Yale's blind obduracy against the elective system may be compiled from R. Freeman Butts, *The College Charts Its Course* (1939)—the most extensive and able but nonetheless extremely partisan application of the Dewey-inspired progressive philosophy of education to the historical development of American colleges."⁵

A more generous view of the Yale Report was taken by Yale historian Ralph Gabriel, author of *The Course of American Democratic Thought*. In 1958 he wrote a book entitled *Religion and Learning at Yale* in which he set the 1828 Report of the Faculty against a background of the burgeoning materialism and apparently limitless prosperity of America. He associated the Report of 1828 with the attack of Emerson and the Transcendentalists on a pervasive and almost overwhelming materialism they saw growing in the country. Gabriel wrote:

*Eight years before Emerson published Nature the writers of the Report of 1828 in public debate opposed to popular materialism a philosophy that derived from a tradition older than Christianity. From classical Greece by way of the Renaissance had come down an ideal and vision of human possibilities . . . The authors of the Report turned it into a manifesto directed to their fellow citizens in America.*⁶

To illustrate his point Gabriel called attention to the following eloquent passage from the Report:

Can merchants, manufacturers and agriculturalists derive no benefit from high intellectual culture? They are the very classes which, from their situation and business, have the best opportunities for reducing the principles of science to their practical applications. The large estates which the tide of prosperity in our country is so rapidly accumulating will fall mostly into their hands. Is it not desirable that they should be men of superior education, of large and liberal views, of those solid and elegant attainments, which will raise them to a higher distinction than the mere possession of property; which will not allow them to hoard their treasures or waste them in senseless extravagance; which will enable them to adorn society by their learning . . . and to make such an application of their wealth as will be most honorable to themselves and most beneficial to their country?

*. . . Light and moderate learning is but poorly fitted to direct the energies of a nation, so widely extended, so intelligent, so powerful in resources, so rapidly advancing in population, strength, and opulence. Where a free government gives full liberty to the human intellect to expand and operate, education should be proportionably liberal and ample. When even our mountains and rivers and lakes are upon a scale which seems to denote that we are destined to be a great and mighty nation, shall our literature be feeble and scanty and superficial?*⁷

The Yale Report was not a succinct statement of purpose for a college catalogue as was Father Brosnahan's little piece. It was a major faculty report that occupied forty-six pages of rather small print when published in *The American Journal of Science and Arts*. Yet there are significant similarities between the two documents.

Brosnahan calls liberal education the full and harmonious development of all the faculties that are distinctive of man. The Yale Report says, "In laying the foundation of a thorough education it is necessary that all the important mental faculties be brought into exercise . . . The mind never attains its full perfection, unless its various powers are so trained as to give them the fair proportions which nature designed."⁸

Brosnahan asserts that, since mental development is the end, such studies are chosen as will most effectively further that end. The Yale Report makes the same point: "Those branches of study should be adopted which are best calculated to teach the art of fixing the attention, directing the train of thought, analyzing a subject proposed for investigation; following with accurate discrimination the course of

EIGHTH ANNUAL PRIZE DEBATE

The Fulton Debating Society of Boston College

QUESTION:

"Should the United States intervene to terminate the
Strike in Cuba?"

COLLEGE HALL, TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1897,

At Eight o'clock P. M.

NO ADMITTANCE DURING THE DEBATE. —

During Father Brosnahan's presidency, Fultonians debated the issue of American military intervention in Cuba.

argument; balancing nicely the evidence presented to the judgement; awakening, elevating, and controlling the imagination; arranging with skill the treasures which memory gathers; rousing and guiding the powers of genius." ⁹

Brosnahan speaks of the educational values of mathematics, the natural sciences, of history and languages, especially the classics. In the Yale Report we read: "From pure mathematics [the student] learns the art of demonstrative reasoning. In attending to the physical sciences he becomes familiar with facts, with the process of induction, and varieties of probable evidence. In ancient literature, he finds some of the most finished models of taste. By English reading he learns the powers of the language in which he is to speak and write. By logic and mental philosophy he is taught the art of thinking, by rhetoric and oratory, the art of speaking." ¹⁰

Brosnahan says that special importance is attached to the classic tongues of Rome and Greece. The Yale Report spends eight pages establishing the same position, saying in sum that "Familiarity with the Greek and Roman writers is especially adapted to form the taste and to discipline the mind, both in thought and diction, to the relish of what is elevated, chaste, and simple." ¹¹

Brosnahan insists that the purpose of liberal education is not to fit the student for some special employment or profession but to give him a general and rounded development that will enable him to cope with even the unexpected contingencies of life. The Yale Report puts

it this way: " . . . the object of the undergraduate course is not to finish a preparation for business, but to impart that various and general knowledge which will improve and elevate and adorn any occupation." ¹²

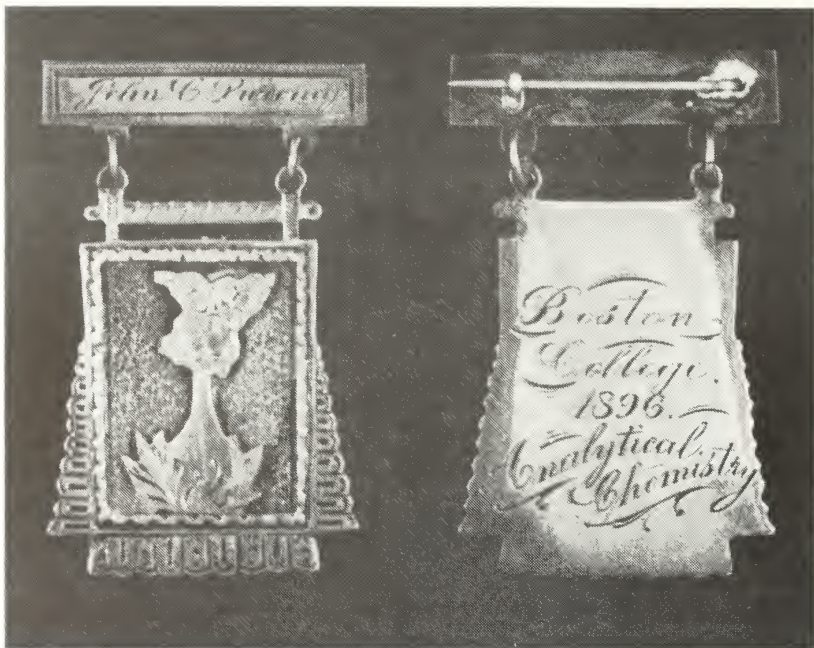
From the similarities in substance and expression between the two documents, one might be tempted to conclude that Brosnahan had the Yale Report before him as he composed his statement. But that is unlikely. Sixty-six years elapsed between the two statements. Indeed the Yale Report may be better known in the latter part of the twentieth century than it was in the last decade of the nineteenth century simply because the systematic study of the history of American higher education and of the college curriculum is an undertaking of the last half century. The point in juxtaposing the two documents is to argue that if the Yale Report is a classic in the evolution of the American college curriculum, the brief exposition of Jesuit liberal education by Father Brosnahan deserves a somewhat comparable place of honor.

In one important respect Brosnahan parted company with the Yale Report. In so long a document, it is almost a fugitive reference—just a sentence or two—but the Yale Report does claim for liberal education some dividends in morality and character. It states: "The great object of a collegiate education . . . is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of character which are not to be found in him whose ideas are confined to one particular channel." It also asserts that the product of a liberal education "has an elevation and dignity of character which gives him a commanding influence in society and a widely extended sphere of usefulness." ¹³

In contrast to what may be called the moral optimism of these brief statements of the Yale Report is the flat contrary assertion of Brosnahan:

. . . the (Jesuit) system does not share the illusion of those who seem to imagine that education, understood as an enriching and stimulating of the intellectual faculties, has a morally elevating influence in human life. While conceding the effects of education in energizing and refining imagination, taste, understanding and powers of knowledge, it has always held that knowledge and intellectual development of themselves have no moral efficacy. Religion only can purify the heart and guide and strengthen the will.

In this passage Brosnahan echoes a second educational classic of the nineteenth century, Newman's *Idea of a University*, with which he can hardly have been unfamiliar. The occasion for Newman's work



Father Brosnahan continued the nineteenth century tradition of awarding sterling silver medals for excellence in each academic discipline.

was a series of lectures in connection with the opening of a Catholic college in Dublin. While giving tribute more eloquent than that from either Yale or Boston College to the refining powers of liberal secular learning, Newman insisted that without theology, without religion, such education was imperfect and incomplete. He summed up his case in these memorable words:

Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life; these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I am advocating, I shall illustrate and insist upon them; but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanc-

tity or even for conscientiousness; they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless, . . .

*Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man.*¹⁴

If the authors of the Yale Report had had an opportunity to read Newman they would probably have agreed with him. Their work grew out of a challenge to the classics in education and they concentrated their response on an exposition of the values of traditional secular learning. Not so Father Brosnahan. In his compact ten paragraphs he adopts the comprehensive view of Newman, embracing both secular liberal learning and religion.

Thus from the comprehensiveness and clarity of his Boston College catalogue statement as well as from its wide acceptance by American Jesuit colleges, Father Timothy Brosnahan earned the title of national spokesman for Jesuit liberal education.

There is another claim Father Brosnahan has to that title, better known than his catalogue statement. It is his elegant reply to President Eliot of Harvard, who in 1899, one year after Brosnahan retired from the presidency of Boston College, made some derogatory remarks about Jesuit education in an *Atlantic Monthly* article.¹⁵ This is alluded to only briefly, because of its probable connection with the Boston College catalogue statement.

Charles W. Eliot became president of Harvard in 1869, when Boston College had not yet granted a degree, and he proceeded to send tremors through the collegiate world by introducing electivism for undergraduates. For Harvard at least, Eliot blew the Yale Report right out of the water, and of course Harvard set the pattern for others. Eliot enjoyed the role of reformer or revolutionary, but the next three decades were stormy ones for him because of his curricular changes. In 1886 the presidents of Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, Wesleyan and other New England colleges approached the Harvard Board of Overseers to try to head off some of Eliot's changes.¹⁶ In 1884 and again in 1885 in articles in the *Princeton Review*¹⁷ and the *New Englander*¹⁸, President Noah Porter of Yale directly attacked Harvard's abandonment of the Greek requirement for the A.B. degree. The tone of reproach and alarm may be gathered from two sentences of Porter's: "We should naturally look for counsels of conservatism to our oldest and wealthiest university, surrounded as it is by a community which is sensitive to many of the noblest and best traditions of generations of cultivated men. We confess our disappointment at both the matter and form of

its breach with its own honored past and with its associates of the present generation."¹⁹

In 1885 the Nineteenth Century Club of New York sponsored a debate between Eliot and President James McCosh of Princeton on electivism in college. Something of the flavor of McCosh's presentation can be gained from the following excerpts:

From the close of Freshman year on it is perfectly practicable for a student to pass through Harvard and receive the degree of Bachelor of Arts without taking any course in Latin, Greek, mathematics, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, logic, psychology, ethics, political economy, German or even English!

*. . . Tell it not in Berlin or Oxford that the once illustrious university in America no longer requires its graduates to know the most perfect language, the grandest literature, the most elevated thinking in all antiquity. Tell it not in Paris, tell it not in Dublin, that Cambridge in America does not make mathematics obligatory on its students. Let not Edinburgh in Scotland and the Puritans in England know that a student may pass through the once Puritan college of America without having taken a single class in philosophy or lesson in religion.*²⁰

These details are given to indicate the level and style of controversy President Eliot was engaged in for three decades and to put in perspective his seemingly gratuitous and intemperate aspersions on Jesuit education during the last year of the nineteenth century. If Eliot ever perused the Boston College catalogue (and that is not entirely unlikely in view of certain problems about admission of Boston College students to professional schools at Harvard in which Eliot became personally involved), he would have read this sentence in Father Brosnahan's statement on Jesuit liberal education: "While giving the mind stay, it tends to remove the insularity of thought and want of mental elasticity which is one of the most hopeless and disheartening results of specialism in students who have not brought to their studies the uniform mental training of a systematic College course." Eliot would have judged the jibe about specialism as just one more attack on the elective principle he had championed.

At any rate, having led the attack on the traditional college curriculum, Eliot decided to take the gospel of electivism to the secondary school and wrote an article on that subject in the course of which he ridiculed the education in Moslem countries according to the Koran and the curriculum of Jesuit colleges, unchanged, as he said, for

four hundred years, as examples of curricular prescription that must rely on divine inspiration since human wisdom could not justify them.²¹

Naturally such a frontal attack by the president of Harvard caused consternation in Jesuit circles. We do not know whether Father Brosnahan, then a professor at Woodstock College, a Jesuit seminary, was asked to write a rejoinder or volunteered to do so. In either case we can assume that his well-received exposition of Jesuit education that had appeared for the prior six years in the Boston College catalogue made him a natural spokesman for the Jesuits on this occasion.

Brosnahan submitted to the *Atlantic Monthly* an article replying to Eliot's animadversions on Jesuit education, but it was rejected by the editor on the grounds that the magazine did not publish articles in controversy. The article appeared in the *Sacred Heart Review*,²² which hardly reached the same audience that had read Eliot's remarks. It was, however, printed in pamphlet form and circulated among educators and editors around the country.

Brosnahan's reply to Eliot was a model of urbanity and rhetorical skill. For decades after its publication its role in American Jesuit collegiate history was acclaimed. Jesuits and Jesuit college alumni felt vindicated by Brosnahan's able presentation, and in some Jesuit rhetoric classes for a few decades afterwards the article was admired and studied as an example of polished dialectic. There was delightful irony in a visit paid to the Boston College dean of faculties in the mid-1970s by a Boston College student who had taken a year off after his sophomore studies. He spent his sabbatical sampling courses at other colleges in the area, some at Harvard, where he visited a course on effective writing in which the class was using Father Brosnahan's reply to President Eliot as a model. The student expressed his outrage at the fact that he had spent two years at a Jesuit college without ever hearing of Brosnahan, but had become acquainted with him across the Charles!

In May 1996, a hundred and two years after Father Brosnahan penned his understanding of and apologia for liberal education for the College catalogue, a distinguished committee of Boston College faculty and administrators, the University Academic Planning Council, published an academic blueprint for entrance into the new millenium. The document lauds and embraces the Jesuit tradition of liberal education. The title of the document is a ringing challenge to carry strengths of the past into the future: "Advancing the Legacy." As we face that challenge, we recall with gratitude the significant role Boston College's tenth president, Father Timothy Brosnahan, played in enunciating the Jesuit liberal arts tradition and his considerable contribution to the legacy we are now called upon to advance.



When Bapst Library was constructed (1924–28), a unique seal was carved into the stone above the fireplace of the impressive third floor chamber of what is now Burns Library, where in recent years the Board of Trustees has met. An imaginative portrayal of the evolution of the University from its South End site to its location and splendor in Chestnut Hill, the seal can also be interpreted as representing the transition from the Brosnahan to the Gasson era. An academic tree of life has its roots planted in the original campus but also seemingly in the phrase whereby the University seal proclaims its spiritual and academic roots: *Religioni et Bonis Artibus*. Gasson Hall seems to rest on the branches of the tree, with Bapst Library and Devlin Hall on either side, apparently resting on echoes of the University seal.

ENDNOTES

1. "Father Timothy Brosnahan," *Woodstock Letters*, Vol. 45 (1916), p. 106.
2. Louis Franklin Snow, *The College Curriculum in the United States*. Privately published in New York in 1907, p. 142.
3. Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962, p. 130.
4. Lewis Thomas, *The Medusa and the Snail*. New York: Viking, 1979, pp. 137-8.
5. George Wilson Pierson, *Yale College*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, Vol. I, p. 630.
6. Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Religion and Learning at Yale*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958, pp. 103-4.
7. "Original Papers in Relation to a Course of Liberal Education," *The American Journal of Science and Arts*, Vol. XV (1829), pp. 323-4.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-9.
14. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898. Discourse V, "Knowledge Its Own End," pp. 120-121.
15. Charles W. Eliot, "Recent Changes in Secondary Education," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 84 (October 1899).
16. Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977, p. 181.
17. Noah Porter, "Greek and a Liberal Education," *Princeton Review*, Vol. 60 (September 1884), pp. 195-218.
18. Noah Porter, "A Criticism from Yale of the Last Harvard Educational Move — Greek and the Bachelor's Degree," *New Englander*, Vol. 44 (May 1885), pp. 424-35.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
20. Cited in Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Princeton: 1746-1896*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 306-7.
21. *Op. cit.*, p. 443.
22. *Sacred Heart Review*, January 13, 1900.

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